

Application Serial No. 10/612,475
Examiner: A.M. Dunwoody
Art Unit: 3679

PATENT
Docket No.: 1945.185US01

Remarks

This is in response to the final Office Action dated March 3, 2005. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Claims 1-10 and 16-19 have been examined. Claims 11-15 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1-10 and 16-19 are pending.

Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Carstens (U.S. Patent No. 4,863,201). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration in view of the following comments.

Claim 1 recites a coupler device with a body having an overmold portion formed on the outer sidewall of the body of the coupler device.

Preliminarily, it is noted that the rejection states that the language "overmold portion" is given little patentable weight because the language is interpreted as a process by which the coupler device is made rather than a structural limitation of the coupler device. This interpretation of the claim language is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

It is respectfully suggested that one skilled in the art would understand the phrase "overmold portion" as used in claim 1 to refer to a structural arrangement between the overmold portion and the body of the coupler, rather than simply a process. Specifically, the term "overmold" is understood by one skilled in the art to require a molecular relationship (i.e., a molecular bond) between the overmold portion and the body of the coupler device.

One advantage associated with the molecular bond formed by the overmold portion is that the integrity of the bond between the overmold portion and the coupler body is maintained throughout the variety of severe environments in which the coupler device can be used. Other structural arrangements that have been used to join components to coupler devices, such as adhesives and mechanical fasteners, do not provide the structural integrity required in severe operating environments.

It is therefore respectfully suggested that the phrase "overmold portion" as used in claim 1 would be understood by one skilled in the art to be a structural limitation and, as such, should be given patentable weight.

The rejection also states that Carstens discloses an overmold portion 14. This characterization of Carstens is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

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Carstens discloses a female coupling member 14 including a plastic sleeve 30 that is joined to a stainless steel coupling body 32 by a set screw 34. (Col. 4, lines 21-50.) Carstens does not disclose or suggest an overmold portion as recited by claim 1 because the relationship between coupling member 14 and coupling body 32 is formed by a set screw 34, rather than by a molecular bond associated with an overmold. The configuration disclosed by Carstens therefore suffers from the same problems as other prior art structural arrangements involving mechanical fasteners, in that the set screw cannot provide the structural integrity required in some environments to maintain a reliable connection between the female coupling and the coupling body.

For at least these reasons, Carstens does not disclose or suggest an overmold portion as recited by claim 1. Favorable reconsideration of claim 1, as well as claims 2-10 that depend therefrom, are respectfully requested.

Claims 16-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Carstens. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration in view of the following comments.

Claims 16-19 depend from claim 1 and should therefore be allowable for at least the same reasons as those identified above for claim 1. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

With these remarks, Applicants believe that the claims now pending are in a condition for allowance. Favorable consideration is respectfully requested. If any further questions arise, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
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